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Open to teachers, administrators, counselors, educators and other individuals interested in building more inclusive, safe and affirming school communities.

**Monday, March 5, 2012 - Fairleigh Dickinson University,
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Friday, May 11, 2012 - location to be announced

**June 25 - 29, 2012 - four-day session at Fairleigh Dickinson University,
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Atlantic County Chapter

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast January 17, 2012

Student Panelist Presentations



109 Church Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Phone: 732-745-9330
Fax: 732-745-9419

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2012 BREAKFAST THEME

Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."
—Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Robert Thompson
St. Joseph's High School

*Thank you to the following schools
attending today's program:*

*Absegami High School
Alder Avenue School
Atlantic City High School
Atlantic City High School East
Buena Regional High School
Cedar Creek High School
Egg Harbor Twp. High School
Fernwood Ave. Middle School
Holy Spirit High School
Hammonton High School
Mainland Regional High School
Oakcrest High School
New York Avenue School
New Jersey Avenue School
Pleasantville High School
Pleasantville Middle School
PleasantTech Academy
St. Joseph High School
Washington Ave. School*

“Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly” this was a powerful line written by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, which in all is a very powerful letter. This quote means that if you hurt or discriminate against one, it affects all in that race or community, I agree with the point Dr. Martin Luther King made with the quote. Since this was written during the Civil Rights Movement it leads you to believe that he was directly speaking about the oppression of African Americans, but I do not believe that. I believe he was trying to bring forth the point that we are all connected in some way, meaning that if you place a stereotype upon a certain race or use a racial slur you're not only degrading yourself and showing your ignorance, but you are also degrading that entire race.

Because I am an athlete I am witness to interdependence every day, In most sports interdependence is displayed in each game and practice. Each team member has a job to do that helps the team win. The team cannot win without the players and the players cannot win without the team. For instance, on the offence of a football the quarterback depends on the linemen to block, but the wide receivers and running backs depend on the quarterback to get them the ball. Without the lineman the quarterback could not throw the ball and without the quarterback throwing the ball, running backs and wide receivers cannot receive the ball; therefore, the team cannot score making it very hard for them to win. When offenses cant score, they then depend on the defense to keep the team from scoring, Many sports are structured the same way and all are built around the idea of interdependence.

In new Jersey an example of interdependence is the dependence between our citizens and our agriculture. Without our states great agricultural resources we would have to receive produce, flowers and other agricultural goods from an outside source. Also, if we do not ship out produce our state's economy would take a major hit, which could result in bankruptcy filed by our state. In America there is a large interdependence between states and government. Many states have certain products that are shipped all over America, for example Idaho is known for its potatoes. States depend on Iowa to produce potatoes while Idaho depends on states to buy potatoes. Our nation's economy is the best example of interdependence there is. In our world today many countries are interdependent on other countries. America is interdependent with the Middle East, because with out it America would have no oil, meaning there wouldn't be any fuel.

When you recognize interconnectivity it helps you learn responsibility and also trust for others. Through interconnectivity you see there is someone depending on you to do your part and also you must depend on someone else to do their job to help you. Interconnectivity allows people to hone their social skills, whether it is through group projects or everyday social encounters, understanding interconnectivity can greatly help someone succeed.

My freshman year, I did not understand how to work in groups, Whenever I was put in a group I felt as though I must do all of the work, because in middle school I never worked with others. When I received my first major High School project I realized it was too much for one person to handle. At first I was stubborn and did not ask for help, but eventually I had to cast away my own selfishness and ask for the help of my group members. Understanding I was park of a group, which was larger than me and also larger than my ego. My group members and I were all connected, and what one of us did affected the entire group.

Kendall Washington
Pleasantville High School

I've always had a fascination with motorcycles. I am amazed how interconnected each part must be for the cycle to run. Remove the smallest part, and the motorcycle is nonfunctional.

Dr. King was a strong African American man who led the civil rights movement. His moral and ethical philosophy represented his belief in the human spirit and that the more we interact with each other, the more we would see our similarities rather than our differences. He believed that whatever affected one directly affected all indirectly, which Pleasantville High School strongly agrees.

Pleasantville High School is the only high school in South Jersey with a Teen Prevention Education Program. Our mission is to equip students with the appropriate knowledge, and skills to avoid pregnancy, HIV/Aids and other STI's. We have workshops teaching underclassman about these issues hoping that facts and information will save lives. Even if only a few students take the information seriously and talk to their friends and family the information will impact the entire community.

Multiple events have caused our nation to join with other nations. The development of interdependence is a conflict-prevention strategy that fortifies cooperation and peace building. Like it or not, we are all in this together. Interconnectivity can benefits me because of my community's impact for my future. What I do in the future could possibly affect America, Iraq, or Japan or even the people on Main Street in Pleasantville. Grasping this concept has allowed me to become appreciative of values and responsibilities with the roles I am given.

Being teenagers, it is our nature to think that everything is about us. We don't always understand that what we do, not only affects us, but our peers, parents, and mentors. Many of my peers including myself are just beginning to recognize that we are a part of something much larger than ourselves. We must surpass our playful, immature ways and grow into our adulthood, by gaining more wisdom and knowledge about our individual and collective success, and through interacting and connecting with others locally and globally. As we all strive for independence there is always going to be interdependence like a motorcycle. Once we come to terms with interdependence we realize our importance as something with a greater value: the World. Clearly as part of the human race, what impacts one directly, impacts all indirectly.

2012 Student Panelists

Dante Venafro, Absegami High School
Courtney A. DeYoung, Atlantic City High School
Angela B. Tucker, Atlantic City High School East
Tori Novack, Buena Regional High School
Nolan Seward, Cedar Creek High School
Omolola "Lola" Agabalogun, Egg Harbor Twp. High School
Nicolette Djokovich, Hammonton High School
JayLyn H. Harris, Holy Spirit High School
JaiRonna Boskett, Mainland Regional High School
Andrew Feliciano, Oakcrest High School
Kendall Washington, Pleasantville High School
Robert Thompson, St. Joseph High School

Dante Venafro
Abseami High School

On April 16th, 1963, Dr. King wrote a letter from Birmingham jail to Alabama clergymen who had called him an “outside agitator.” He had been leading a peaceful demonstration in the historically racist and violent city, which the clergymen found meddling... but they did not understand the concept of interconnectivity. In his letter, King was trying to open their eyes to the fact that there is an interrelatedness between all communities, and therefore injustices in Birmingham cannot be overlooked just because they didn’t directly affect him. This idea of interrelatedness also encompasses simply lending a helping hand to those holding theirs out for help because of the understanding that we are all part of something larger than ourselves.

The benefits of selfless mutuality can be seen as recently as yesterday in America’s relationship with Japan. The American Red Cross, funded by the charity of Americans, aided Japan after the Kobe earthquake in 1995 and they, in turn, sent help to America after 9 -11 and Hurricane Katrina. We, in turn, continue to aid them after their devastating tsunami and earthquake over the summer. As opposed to war, this mutual cycle of goodness in the world is refreshing.

I believe I have been a part of a mutual cycle of goodness in my high school. Chosen by Lead for Diversity, I as well as many other positive leaders in my school, worked with compassionate teachers to run our first Be The Change Day. We facilitated activities which allowed students of many different sexual orientations, races, and social circles, as well as people who we felt were intolerant of these differences, to have a powerful experience breaking down stereotypes in order to see the individual. Ever since that day I have come to enjoy the interdependence of friendship with many people I otherwise would not have known, and I have seen for myself people of differences become people of compassion

Now, having experienced interconnectivity, I understand its importance. As Dr. King said himself, “If a man hasn’t discovered something he will die for, he isn’t fit to live.” Simply stated, without purpose, life cannot be experienced to its full potential. I have learned that sustenance and purpose can be brought into one’s life by recognizing and contributing to something larger than yourself, whether it’s the well being of those struck by disaster or the well mind of those struck by intolerance. We cannot escape each other, so why not love each other? Thank you.

Andrew Feliciano
Oakcrest High School

Good Morning,

My name is Andrew Feliciano and I am the President of Spanish Interest Club at Oakcrest High School.

I stand here today to explain the significance of the historic reputation that was left behind by no other than Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He once stated “Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” The words within the quote are self-explanatory, but personally agree with the statement. It’s amazing that such little words can have an impact not only for a single person, but for all humanity. From my understanding, no matter what tribulations, difficulties or challenges that someone can endure in their lifetime will not only affect them, but somehow or someway it will affect those in your surroundings. At times we might not appreciate what we have until it is either taken away from us for certain or almost gone. This very moment my family and I are extremely close to losing my only sister. She recently experienced an accident that caused her to be on life support. Until this day she is still recovering. But there is not a single day that goes by without thinking how close we were to not having her this year. In a matter of seconds your life can flash before your eyes. Life itself is too precious to be taken for granted. I strongly believe in my heart that my sister is still here today with us, because of the grace of the Lord. She was given another chance to live one again, because we are all here for a purpose. Our lives were not perfect before this tragedy, but it has made my family stronger than ever before. With that said I believe that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. represented the value of life. We must enjoy life to the fullest and become the best individuals possible.

It has been a great honor to speak in front of your presence and I would like to thank you for considering the principles of Martin Luther King’s teachings.

JaiRonna Boskett
Mainland Regional High School

Not only do I agree with the quote, “Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly” we live it every day. At Mainland Regional High School, seniors have the privilege to leave the campus during lunch. Due to disobedient and rebellious students, upcoming students may not get to enjoy this privilege. Even though all students aren’t disobedient and rebellious, it still affects the entire student body.

There are many examples of interdependence in our nation and across the world. Lehman Brothers, a big firm which failed due to bad loans, caused a tighter credit standard which means that not every one (large and small as well as individuals) could get loans to expand their businesses. Because of that, businesses that offer products to people looking to expand on projects such as Home Depot, didn’t bring in as much money and reduced their employment.

Recognizing interconnectivity will help me seek to lead a more moral or honest life where I understand my actions. Watching negative events can help me promote positive events to better humanity for all. It helps me better understand people from a cultural and social perspective.

There are times when I have failed to recognize how I as an individual am connected to something greater than myself. For example, I am a child of divorced parents. It’s hard trying to compromise and be at the same place at one time. I stay with my mom on weekdays and visit my dad on weekends and vacations. I failed to realize how much my dad misses me; and on vacations and weekends I hang out with my friends. Noticing how I felt it made me realize I was affecting my dad as well. Barely seeing him as it is, I would still go to my friend’s house instead. There were verbal connections that passed between us. Soon I then discovered that things weren’t always about me being happy but also for others who are connected to me as well.

Dr. King’s quote “Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly” is not just a social phrase, but it’s something we live. So yes, I agree with his quote. It points out the interconnectivity, the interdependence and most of our entire bond between each other.

Courtney A. DeYoung
Atlantic City High School

I was sitting in my first grade art class at Trocki Hebrew Academy, a Jewish day school that I attended for ten years, when my teacher asked us to draw a family portrait. All my friends began to draw their moms and dads; I sat contemplating what would fill my paper. I decided I would not be drawing my mom and dad, but rather my grandmother and grandfather with whom I lived. Additionally, I did not feel comfortable coloring myself in with the peach crayon that all my classmates would use. I would leave myself uncolored because I did not want to be different. I always knew I was a little darker than most of my classmates, and that my family structure was different and because of these differences I did not have a lot of self-confidence. Never did I realize how this, a simple assignment in first grade, would later define how I see the world.

Today I see the world as a place where difference is respected and often celebrated. It is place where the idea of fitting in is just a phase in life that one soon leaves behind. Unlike the first grader who was trying so hard to fit in, I am now the senior doing whatever it takes to stand out. Unlike the bashful and taciturn first grader, I am no longer shy or quiet about who I am. I am the girl who was raised by her grandparents since age one. I am the girl who is very active in the Jewish community. I am the girl with the white mother and black father. I am the girl who does her best to help those who lack the confidence that I once did, and it is that first grade experience that motivates me to offer others such help.

Time after time people ask me, “If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be?” When I was younger my response to this question was, “Everything” because of the aforementioned reasons. Now that I have grown up, I am able to see how fortunate I am to have an incredible family, a wonderful education, and most importantly a great deal of self-confidence and my answer to this question is, “Nothing.”

Angela B. Tucker
Atlantic City High School East

It has become common today to dismiss Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s unambiguous written response to eight clergymen in April of 1963. Dr. King while incarcerated in Birmingham's city jail wrote this letter

Dr. King's response recapitulated the civil protest he was leading that demonstrated against racial and social injustice. He identified a number of misunderstandings, conflicts, injustice, and conditions that took place in Birmingham. Conversely, the clergymen of Birmingham and a few others did not have similar concerns as Dr. King. Dr. King became conscious of what was affecting the racial and social injustice of the people of Birmingham. One issue that he wanted to have people reflect upon and that caused him to feel there was a strong need for civil protest, and I quote... 'whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.'

This quotation stated by Dr. King advises on how the world as a whole is interconnected with our nation or how one state is mutually connected to other states. This quote also brings about relevance to today's world, as well as, resonance to me. In short, Dr. King is observing how interdependence played a key role in Birmingham and in recent discussions of today's world and its people.

Although I agree with Dr. King's quotes up to a point, I cannot accept his overall conclusion that "all" are indirectly affected by an individual's decision or judgment. I say this because I rhetorically question, "Does it really affect the rich, such as celebrities, politicians, and/or wealthy businesspersons when they have the financial means to make changes or avoid consequences that others may not be able to solve. I have also observed and researched several situations where a decision made by one person made a difference to a whole quantity of a certain group of people, who where one was dependent on another.

In addressing the question of interdependence, I have observed a great deal of similarities in my school, community, and our nation. An example would be to consider students and teachers. We, students depend on our teachers to provide a great deal of education to help prepare us for college, a job, or whatever future endeavors we may pursue. Just as importantly, our community depends on us to take sustainable action in making our community better.

Another prime example is as a means of helping the nation recover from the 9/11 terrorist attacks, in late September 2001, during a speech to Congress, President George W. Bush advised that the importance of the nation's participation and confidence in the American economy. Observing President Bush's remarks, he was depending on the nation not to give up on him or the nation's economy. If the American people had overlooked President Bush's concerns, who knows how many other terrorist attacks might have taken place due to perceived signs of weakness in the American economy.

Although some readers may object to my claims, I would reply that it is not problematic to recognize and support interconnectivity. As individuals, we are all associated with something or someone.

JayLyn H. Harris
Holy Spirit High School

"Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality." These are the words of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. responding to a statement by clergymen calling Dr. King's activities in Birmingham "unwise and untimely." Dr. King wrote a detailed letter on April 16, 1963, while incarcerated in the Birmingham jail on to the local clergy to provide them with a better understanding of why he was in Birmingham. At the time, Birmingham was the most segregated city in the nation. Dr. King made a point to say that he wasn't there to cause harm. He was aware of the interrelatedness between all the communities and states and by remaining in Atlanta, the segregation in Birmingham wouldn't get any better. Dr. King stated, "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." In simple terms, the more people were denied justice, the more they were at a loss in gaining rights as people.

I agree with the quote, "Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly." Interdependence is when two people, groups, or states are dependent upon each other for important needs.

The most recent and significant example of interdependence is the negative impact of the financial disaster, which began with the distribution of mortgages to people that could not afford the mortgages. The impact resulted in a global economic crisis. Like a domino effect, the financial crisis has effected governments, businesses and individuals. In many communities, homeowners have lost their homes because of high mortgages or unemployment. Fewer taxes to government has resulted in government employee layoffs and a decrease in services that local, state, county and federal governments can provide to citizens like policemen and firemen. New construction has drastically decreased, which has caused unemployment in the construction industry directly and unemployment in other industries as well. For example, the retail industry has experienced fewer sales because people have less money to make purchases and are only buying necessities.

We live in a local community and a state that depends on the casino industry for jobs and money. The casinos are earning less profit because people don't have money to spend on gambling now. The financial crisis has caused less funding to schools resulting in programs and activity cuts. Money for things such as trips, new equipment, etc. are cut out of local school budgets. With budget cuts, not only are students missing out on activities outside of school, but overall its affecting their education.

Recognizing interconnectivity has enabled me to see the larger picture and how factors don't only affect one person, but a larger group.

Nicole Djokovich
Hammonton High School

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality."

Our society has been built upon an independent perspective for many years. Whether a person be rich or poor, black or white they all serve a purpose within the society in which we live. Dr. King dedicated his life to bringing justice, equality and freedom to every man in our nation with this belief pushing him to do so. Though it has been almost 44 years since the death of Dr. King, his powerful words still hold a prominent value within my own school and community today.

The idea that we all work together to achieve values as justice, equality, and freedom truly inspires me. It inspires me to keep practicing everything that Dr. King stood for by judging no one and keeping an open mind. It inspires me to be my best, because as long as we work to be the best that we can be, we are making a difference. Although being your best seems to only be affecting you directly, you are actually affecting everyone around you indirectly. I know that I work very hard on making myself a better person everyday. Holding the position of Student Council President at Hammonton High School puts me in front of many different people everyday. My "best person" has no judgments, acts boldly, and stands for values such as respecting one another or making everyone equal. By being the best that we can be, we can show our own schools and communities that actions most times speak louder than words.

Interdependence and interconnectivity surround us every day. No matter what race, ethnicity, economical status, or religion a student may be, they matter a great amount to our schools. This is because the betterment of our schools and communities is dependent upon each individual's actions. We all grow with the help of each other. We all serve a purpose, even if it is something as simple as bringing joy to just one other student every day. Although that student may be bringing joy to just one student, that one student may bring joy to another, and so on. It is like a machine. If one bolt is loose, the whole machine cannot run properly. I see this occur every day within Hammonton High School. I also see this occur everyday within our society as a whole. One person makes a difference and one person can change a life. Today we are here because of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He was that one person. Thank you.

Tori Novack
Buena Regional High School

Martin Luther King Jr., once said "Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." This concept holds true in small groups and worldwide. The actions of one, though they may not realize it, affect all of those around them. It is up to the individual to see that everything is interconnected.

In school, students are sometimes assigned group projects. However, if one student gets sick and can't attend school, they can't help with the project. The rest of the group will have to continue to work without the assistance of their partner. Therefore, it is not the ailment that affects the group, but that the student wasn't in school. The illness has a direct effect upon the group.

There is also a level of global interdependence in the case of the environment. One example is electricity versus solar power. For instance, one company might switch from electric to solar. The direct effect upon them would be the smaller electric bill. However, the entire world would benefit from the switch. They won't be requiring power plants to release harmful CO₂, NO_x, and SO_x into the air. Therefore, the entire world benefits.

If everyone realized they were part of something larger than themselves, they would work toward doing their part. Martin Luther King, Jr. valued the rights of the individual as guaranteed in the Constitution, but it is up to each of us to remember that we are also part of something larger. One can switch to cleaner energy sources to save money while reducing the amount of harmful greenhouse gases into the world. Also, they can better understand that everything they do can and will have a consequence, large or small.

Therefore, things that affect one person, group or industry can effect upon every business, community and the entire world. When people realize they are interconnected, they can do something about things that they never thought they could before. After all, one person can start a chain reaction. It is up to the individual to realize that they are independent, but their actions can affect everything around them.

Nolan Seward
Cedar Creek High School

In collaboration with Lasana Toure and Caleb Graves

Hello Ladies and Gentlemen, we are representatives from Cedar Creek High School and would like to say thank you for the opportunity to come here today and be a part of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Brotherhood/Sisterhood Breakfast:

Martin Luther King Jr. once said “Whatever affects one directly can affect all indirectly.” He depicts a cycle of infection and problematic issues that start with one and spread to all. Dr. King began a time in American history where peace and togetherness was put before violence and selfishness. The ways that these emotions can travel from person to person are very simple. My classmates and I completely agree with this quote because it is true in all senses of the word. We always see situations of interdependence and also go through the same situations individually day to day. Even in our community people work together to get a common goal accomplished and people with what seems to be the smallest of jobs end up playing the biggest roles in accomplishing things. In the state, nation, and even the world nations that have issues amongst themselves affect the entire world. For example the Vietnam War began over issues that started between North and South Korea and eventually many nations were involved and at war because these things that affect one part of any type of system can magnify into a big problem affecting the whole system.

Recognizing interconnectivity in situations can result in great success because when a person knows that it will take an entire group to have success he or she will make sure that all parts will work cohesively and have a very good outcome. All of us were on the varsity football team at Cedar Creek and serve as leaders of our school. Many of our teammates and even we have missed practice or even assignments on the field that affected the total outcome of the game. One block missed, one throw too late, or one man unaccounted for cannot only hurt yourself but the interconnection you are a part of.

Omolola “Lola” Agabalogun
Egg Harbor Twp. High School

I believe in a “circle of life.” Not so much the one portrayed in Disney’s *Lion King*, but a circle of life in which all humans are interconnected. In my own life, I have seen the power of a collective society. One area of life in which I consistently see interdependence is service. Whether it is holding a door open for someone or organizing a fundraiser to benefit a foundation, the magnitude is simply a measure. No matter how small or large the endeavor, one must know that they are affecting someone else.

The fundamental fibers of our society rest on interconnectivity and mutual dependence. In any school, there is a hierarchy of administrators, supervisors, teachers, and students. All of these people are there to assist one another, but many times, this may happen without any knowledge. Like the pieces of a puzzle, the members of a school community must all be present for the school to run smoothly, for the picture to be complete. This system can be seen as a microcosm of our state, of our country, and of the world. The coordination of our local and state governments, the state government’s coordination with the federal government, and even the federal government’s coordination with the United Nations; in order for any system to be most efficient, it must recognize that no act is singularly exclusive.

When people recognize the ever-present web connecting society, they will become more cognizant of the decisions they make. Through these realizations, people can develop more insight. These are goals for which we should naturally strive towards. Personally, I have learned that it is essential to recognize how I am connected to all those around me. When my brother and I were planning and implementing a benefit for an organization, at times I became discouraged. I realized that my dissidence brought down the morale of everyone involved and that I needed to re-evaluate my attitude in order to achieve our common goal. I learned that the interdependence that surrounds all of us allows us to better strive for the greater good.